[ARCHERS]

584 62 [581] Marriage is certainly an economic factor of the greatest importance to the band, and the decision of the elders usually prevails. But according to Schebesta, if there is particularly ardent affection between an unmarried couple, they may be strong enough to resist group opinion even to the point of ignoring its just claims, in which case a compromise will be reached by the bands concerned. Although there may be preferences for marriage between certain bands, no marriage is arranged with disregard for individual inclinations. Each union is usually preceded by a period of flirtation and courtship.

613 62 832 The rule of exogamy bars any flirtation within a hunting band that consists of a single lineage. If the band consists of two lineages, there may be flirtation but controlled by the parents, the mother keeping an eye on her daughter, and the fathers or lineage heads [836] watching over the boys. Schebesta believes that in spite of such supervision there is, in fact, great premarital freedom, though always outside the bounds of exogamic prohibition. For [684] the Efe, he records what appears to be a bor- [177] rowed custom of making payments to the father of the girl, or to her mother, either for the privilege of having an affair with their daughter or as a penalty for being discovered.[1]

[839] [838] [1] Masturbation (*ai ofuni*), homosexuality (*ai bopa*), and adultery are known among the archers, but rarely. Lesbians (*dora bopa*) are unknown. Mbuti who practice such behavior are regarded by men with derision; women have a particular horror of homosexuals.

[P. 180 - B]

[ARCHERS]

[P.180-C]

Marriage, however, is not necessarily preceded by a period of courtship. Schebesta (1952, 233) attests to the betrothal of infants by their parents but does not know how frequently these betrothals result in marriage. The ultimate essential is agreement between individuals and their respective lineages. The qualities in a man appreciated by a girl are courage, decision, prowess in the hunt, and ability in the dance. Her hunting band also appreciates these qualities and receives favorably any suitor who brings presents of game that he has killed, but it is said to be more interested in the suitor's band. There is no formal adult betrothal; the boy visits the girl's camp and spends some days there, giving her small presents. Her acceptance of the presents and reciprocation of his attentions constitute betrothal; it remains only to secure the agreement of the two bands and to overcome the obstacle of exchange price. If a youth fears that his prowess as a hunter or dancer is not sufficiently impressive to prove his manliness, he will resort to various love philters. Philters are also used by Mbuti girls.

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[581]

[431]

[832]

[ARCHERS]

[P. 182-A]

832 Mbuti, considered as signs that adultery has
845 taken place. An offended wife has the right to
829 leave her husband; an offended husband may chastise his wife and attack his rival, possibly leading to a feud between two bands. If he finds his wife *in flagrante delicto*, he has the right to kill her lover. However, Schebesta cites no case histories.

Separation

586 A husband's justification for separation is based on the constant infidelity of the wife, her sterility, her selfishness leading to neglect of her husband, sickness, or suspicion of sorcery. On the woman's side, separation is justified by ill treatment by her husband, neglect of his hunting duties, and his infidelity. Separation is achieved simply by each band's reclaiming the daughter it gave in exchange, or effecting compensation. It does not necessarily involve hostility between the two bands, in which case the children may remain with their father, without their mother's becoming ostracized from the community. Also, a child may remain with its mother, even if she returns to her own band or remarries into another. Only when a child marries is there a necessity to settle the question of its economic allegiance.

551 Thus in the Epulu region most Mbuti have both Ngwana and Bira names, not necessarily with [613] the same meaning. The occasional use of a [602] grandfather's name is another indication of the lack of importance attached to lineal ties in this group, and an indication of the size of the largest group to which they conceive of themselves as belonging. [614] Clan names (ancestor names) exist, but these seem to have little social significance. [103] Place names are used frequently to differentiate one hunting band from [101] another.

621 563 It is virtually impossible to distinguish any of the alien families that have attached themselves to a net-hunting band, so completely are [832] they assimilated. Perhaps the easiest indication would be open flirtation between members of the opposite sex within a hunting band. And 621 finally (see below, p. 257, for a fuller treat- 575 ment), there is the *elima*, the women's religious 562 association which unites the women of the band 182 in opposition to the men (regardless of lineage), and at the same time acknowledges the common values of both, so unites them as a single group in relation to the forest. It also unifies the total [186] band in relationship to the worlds of spirits, animals, villagers, and presumably of other semi-human beings such as Europeans. It never unifies the band in opposition to other hunting bands or lineages.

[P. 246-B]

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the first appearance in a girl of menstrual blood. But there the similarity ends.

Be that as it may, the villagers do not take nearly as much interest in the puberty of the Mbuti girls as they do in the puberty of the boys. The Mbuti generally seem to hold part of their *elima* festivals in the forest, and the closing part in the village. In this way they are able to pursue their own way through the festival without interference, claiming a feast at village expense only when the forest festival is virtually ended. Village interest in the *elima* while it is in the forest is not manifest in any practical way, although a particularly fond *kpara's* wife might send out an occasional gift of plantains or manioc. But when the *elima* moves to the village there is invariably some conflict, because the closing phase of the Mbuti *elima* is particularly untraditional in the eyes of the villagers (as well it might be, for in fact it is probably a totally different tradition) and offensive to their tribal lore. In particular in recent years, there has been a tendency for Mbuti girls to imitate the boy's *nkumbi*, of which they are supposed to know almost nothing. They display an intimate knowledge of the most jealously guarded secrets, and there have been, throughout the Ndaka and Bira tribal areas, instances of *elima* girls adopting both the costumes of the boy initiates and some of their behavior.

In 1958 the Epulu band went so far that both the Bira and the Ndaka chiefs and ritual specialists joined in complaint, and threatened the *elima* girls (the two candidates and their companions, known jointly as the *bamelima*) with a death curse if they did not desist. The girls were upset because they claimed that they had merely adopted the boys' costume because it was so much prettier than the traditional costume approved by villagers for village *elima* girls. And was not the whole idea to look pretty? Of course from the village point of view the whole idea was to behave as one defiled, and this is one of several indications of the total difference between the two attitudes to the event of puberty.

We shall see that the Mbuti attitude is that a girl's first menstrual period is an indication of her readiness for motherhood, and is therefore a time for great and public rejoicing (see Turnbull, 1960[1]). It is also a time when boys and girls should get together and think about settling down in marriage, so it is a time for experimentation. The girls are expected, during the last stages of the festival, to look their best at all times, and they paint and decorate and dress themselves to

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excellent effect. They flaunt themselves in public, to the increased dismay of the villagers.

The villagers regard the appearance of menstrual blood as a disaster, and as the inauguration of a time of great danger for the girl, her family and, by extension, the whole tribe. She is considered as unclean, and is rigorously secluded and abased. Her family has to undertake a series of purification rituals ending in a feast (the part of the ceremony for which the Mbuti solicit "help"). They also have to discover the cause of the blood, which is believed by the Plains Bira and still by a number of the Forest Bira to be due to intercourse. The girl is questioned as to who caused the blood, and she names the youth on whom she has set her heart. He may acknowledge the blame, whether or not he ever had intercourse with her, and can then resolve the unclean situation by marrying her. If his wishes are otherwise he can deny her accusation and she will have to try elsewhere. The girl's parents will guide her accusations as they think necessary, but the actual extent to which the village *elima* leads thus directly into marriage seems to vary. Sometimes it is sufficient to secure admission of guilt and payment in lieu of marriage. But the villagers seldom try to follow an Mbuti *elima* through its full course; their major concern is that the impurity of the *elima* girls should not touch them. The provision of the final feast gives them an opportunity, which they do not always take, for supervising the ritual purification of the girls by bathing, the cleansing of the *elima* house, and the ritual disposal of all clothing and bedding and utensils used by the *bamelima*. The latter they do generally supervise, as the Mbuti are notoriously loath to part with perfectly good clothing or bedding for such *bulé* reasons, and will try to avoid having them destroyed.

If anything, the *elima* sets the villagers and the Mbuti apart, rather than offering any means for drawing them closer together. This is perhaps because while the *nkumbi* involves the village ancestors and is in honor of them, and secures their blessing, the village *elima* involves malevolent spirits more than it involves the ancestors. And as far as the villagers are concerned, evil spirits emanate from the forest. The *elima* offers no opportunity to the villagers for placing Mbuti girls under the control of the ancestral spirits; at the most, it offers them a responsibility for freeing them from contamination by the evil spirits. They sometimes voice the opinion that the Mbuti are in league with those spirits emanating from the forest, and rigorously avoid any contact with an Mbuti *elima*.

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stated and observed rule of incest, and although genealogical memories are short, never rising further than two above ego, it is adequate in preventing the marriage of first cousins.[7] This seems to be about the limit of the intended restriction, as at this level flirtation, accompanied by sexual intercourse, may take place with only nominal disapproval. The disapproval becomes more loudly voiced if the young couple seem to be forming too strong an affection for each other, such as would normally lead to marriage.

There is some expressed disapproval, of about the same degree of seriousness, if children of the same social mother, but not of the same stomach, flirt with each other, but such flirtations happen.

I found it impossible to discover a single admitted instance of incest closer than between first cousins, but there is some evident restraint between brothers and sisters, none between mothers and sons, little between fathers and daughters. To swear at someone by accusing them of having sex with their parent is mild; it is more serious to accuse them of having sex with their sibling of one stomach. Worst of all is to accuse someone of having sex with her or his spouse. (The degree of freedom between sons and mothers may be seen in the fact that a mother gives strength to her children, if they are ill, by sleeping in the same bed with them. This is sometimes done between a mother and her adult son, so long as he is unmarried, without occasioning any comment.)

Together with this lack of emphasis on the biological aspects of kinship and the accompanying generational system of terminology goes a lack of formal restrictions on behavior between different kin categories, and a marked unwillingness to clearly define kin relationships between individuals. One suspects at times that the apparent shortness of genealogical memory is almost deliberate, for not only would such memory have no use, it would, in fact, undermine the whole delicate balance of social relationships among the Mbuti.

AGE GROUPS

Table 6 shows quite clearly the effective difference between the village system and the system of the Mbuti, granting that they both share the same terminology. The fact that among the Mbuti all mem-

[7] It is often stated generally that one marries nobody related through either the father's or the mother's line, but in special situations the restriction is narrowed down as given here.

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Women are equally quick to ridicule the menfolk when there is justification.

This is also a time favored by youths for slipping off into the forest with their girl friends for some not very quiet lovemaking. Although lovemaking is not performed openly, no great attempt is made to conceal it. The general feeling is that if surprised in the act, one simply says hello (*karibu*) politely and expects the intruder to continue on his way. Fathers, and mothers too, refer to the nuisance of a flirtatious son or daughter whom they might surprise in this way. The parent pretends to see nothing in such a case, and the youths claim, with more bravado than truth perhaps, not to be unduly disturbed unless they are making love to a relative.

Lovemaking generally takes place in the forest, though there is no fixed rule. It is thought somewhat exciting to make love in a hut, but not very healthy. There are preferences that individuals have for making love near a stream, or in a splash of sunlight, or in the dark depths of the forest. It is evidently a purely aesthetic consideration, and I have heard a number of youths who stated that the best time was while hunting. But moonlight evidently attracts a great number, and I have met several who talk, with great poetry, of the joys of masturbation when alone in the moonlight. On three rare occasions I have seen different individuals dancing, by themselves, in the moonlight and in the forest, away from the camp. The intimacy between the individual and the forest—one might almost say the act of making love to the forest—was expressed by one Mbuti who said, when I questioned him as to why he was dancing alone, that he was dancing with the forest, dancing with the moon. He then continued his dance with the utmost unconcern.

Not all lovemaking is quite so romantic, however, and when boys and girls are following a trail together, the procession may degenerate into a good-humored but undeniably lusty orgy. A boy may rip off a girl's outer bark cloth, if he can catch her, but he may never have intercourse with her without her permission. I know of no cases of rape, though boys often talk about their intentions of forcing reluctant maidens to their will.

There are no formal bachelor huts, but many camps have informal variants. They are sometimes built for an older youth by his mother, or they may be taken over by adolescent boys or girls when the occupant leaves for some reason. In such huts, and even out in the open, around the campfire, it is usual to see not only youths but also

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them. Youths join the older children at this game, but never in a supervisory capacity.

Youths may also join the children on their swings in the *bopi*, and will almost certainly build their swings for them, climbing high up into adjacent trees to drape a long liana between them. They then teach the younger children the wild somersaulting games on these swings that are particularly characteristic of the honey season. On the other side the youths equally often join the hunters but, again, always as a separate group, sometimes participating fully, but still as youths. And as youths they continue the process already begun in childhood, of growing more away from their nuclear families and together as an age group. Their hunting and scavenging abilities are greater, and they sometimes even maintain a self-sufficient food economy. As youths they are allowed to stay up at night, instead of retiring with their mothers, and they build their own fire near the hunters' fire and cook their own food and sing and dance, sometimes with the hunters and elders, sometimes separately.

As youths they are also given increasing responsibility, especially in the economic life of the band. They may listen to the discussions of the hunters and elders, but even if they make comments, as they do, they are not readily listened to unless it is a matter pertaining to their age group. Then they are required to be able to voice their opinions and cite precedents. They are expected to show an adult sense of responsibility in matters concerning sex and marriage, and although they may flirt quite openly and even audaciously, they never "play house," and not until after the *elima* will a girl again show her favor by cooking for a boy. Then it is tantamount to an admission of betrothal.

After marriage a boy acquires a net. It may be made for him by his mother, or his father may give him part of his net to which he will add, with his wife's help. He has already demonstrated his hunting prowess or he would not be married, but now he is a full hunter with additional responsibilities. Whereas economic activity is shared between the hunters and youths, it is the hunters who ultimately make the decisions concerning camp life, and about the hunt. Where to go for the daily hunt, when to move camp, to what region, how to deal with threats of physical danger, and how to surmount physical problems; such are the questions the hunter has to face. They all concern the band as a whole. Nonphysical dangers and problems—that is to say, moral, psychological and spiritual issues, those that affect the

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have intercourse with her, he must then stay in the *elima* hut until the end of the festival, and he will be considered as her betrothed. There is no doubt that the girls are, like their mothers, anxious to find suitable lovers who may become their betrothed, and it would indeed only be a particularly flirtatious girl who did not hope that her *elima* would end in betrothal. During the first weeks the girls have ample opportunity for experimentation, and it may be assumed that such experimentation began even before the festival began. But in the last two weeks they are looking for a future husband, and they take great pains to paint their bodies and make themselves beautiful for their evening appearances outside the *elima* hut.

These occasions are formal presentations of the girls as adults. For the first time they sing the *elima* songs and dance before the entire band, and for the first time the youths who are considered as suitable candidates sit together and join in the singing with the girls. Each youth will try to catch the attention of the girl of his choice, and each girl will try to respond, but the occasion is a serious one, and the mothers, who sit with the girls and separate them from the youths, sharply reprove anyone who is caught flirting. When the singing is over, the girls are shepherded back into their hut, and unless they come out in an attack with their whips, no boy may enter.

The length of the festival is anything from one to two months, and it ends without regard to the successful betrothal or otherwise of the *elima* girls. The girls are taken to a nearby stream in the early hours of one morning, and wash themselves carefully a number of times. I have heard them refer to this as "washing the blood," but this is also a village expression for the ritual purification of a menstruating woman, and it is impossible to be sure of the exact significance of the term for the Mbuti until more material is available. The washing, however, is unlike that of village ritual washing, being completely informal, the *elima* girls washing together with all the others, eating and drinking in between sessions of swimming and splashing and playing in the water. When it is over they return to the camp, rub their bodies with oil, sing and dance in public as much or as little as they like and without adult supervision. They continue to stay together throughout the day as a group, but in the evening they disperse to their individual homesteads. For the next few days this is repeated, without the washing, and then the camp returns to normal.

If a betrothal has been effected, the boy will wait for a suitable opportunity, then make the proper approach to the girl's parents, asking

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A recently married Mbuti girl, while in the village, slept with a villager. On returning to the hunting camp the first youth she met (Pepei, totally unrelated) beat her up severely, throwing her to the ground, holding her by one arm and kicking her. Nobody intervened, even her parents, and not a word was said about the incident.

That evening Pepei complained to the camp that no girls would sleep with him because he was an orphan, but when he began to make allusions indicating that this was one reason why he beat up the girl, Moké broke in and said that the only reason girls didn't sleep with Pepei was that he was so old. He was about nineteen.

18. It is seldom that within a camp a girl will go after one of the married men as blatantly as did Biyokenama, one of Tungana's daughters. Moreover, Biyokenama's father was distantly related to Masisi, the father of her lover, Ageronga. One morning she went so far as to follow Ageronga down to the section of the stream where the men bathed, taking off her cloth as she went. Ageronga's wife, Ambelema, a husky maiden, went in pursuit, hurling abuse. Biyokenama was heard yelling that Ambelema had no business suggesting such dreadful things; how could anyone think that she, Biyo, would flirt with her "brother"? But Ambelema had seen enough and began fighting. Tough as she was, she lost three teeth and came running back to the camp in tears. Biyokenama prudently took off for the village.

Everyone waited for Ageronga, who eventually came wandering in and went up to Biyokenama's mother and said he wanted three hundred francs, one for each tooth her daughter had taken from his wife. He said Biyokenama followed him without reason, that he wanted nothing to do with her, that she was a nuisance. Nobody believed this, but it was clearly a statement of loyalty, and sympathy swung to his side. It was agreed, in a discussion in which mainly youths took part, that Ambelema should not have said such dreadful things to Biyokenama, that even if true they were better not said; but the blame was more firmly placed on Biyokenama, and her mother was urged to take better care of her in future.

19. Marital disputes that are overheard but not deliberately forced on the attention of the band are ignored for the most part. If they are noisy and keep people awake, there may be complaints or there may be some ridicule. Certainly a fight going on between husband and wife inside a hut is followed with zest by all the youths and some of the younger married couples. These may even stand around watching

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group, as often happens. But Kenge was his son by another wife, from a totally unrelated group. By Njobo's sister his father had one daughter, and she was Kenge's only real blood relative in the whole group. This was important, as it enabled him to flirt with almost any of the other girls, with the added spice of its being thought incestuous, because they belonged to his group even though they were totally unrelated.

Since I had been with them before, the group had changed slightly, with a few additions and subtractions. At their suggestion I decided to build my own house in their village camp. It looked as if we were in for a long spell in the village. The camp was in a strategic position between the village of the workers of the motel and Station de Chasse and that of Camp Putnam, near the stores and the beer house, and—even more important—near all the surrounding plantations. Progressive old Tungana said that it was a good site because tourists could drive close by and take their photographs and give them money. Manyalibo, in his dry way, said the only good thing about it was that it was close to the plantations so he didn't have to go far to steal his food. The youngsters liked it because it was near the houses of Negro villagers, where they could go begging for cigarettes, old clothes, and palm wine.

It looked, in fact, as if these Pygmies had become as professional as those that line the roadside at Beni, on the edge of the forest, selling their services to tourists, letting themselves be photographed doing things they would never do in the forest, wearing clothes they wouldn't wear except in a village, even selling the tourist weapons used only by Negroes. But Moke reassured me. His face wrinkled up in smiles, and in his soft, toothless voice he told me not to worry, that we would all be back in the forest long before my house was finished. "That is where we belong," he said, "and we shall return soon. We cannot refuse the forest." He was right, but it was in

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stalled themselves with the rest of the family at the north end of the camp. Shortly afterward Cephu arrived. Ekianga had brought news that he was on his way, and there had been a lot of argument. In spite of the auspicious killing of a sondu on the first day, the hunting since had not been very good, and already the camp was large. There were about twenty-five huts now, forming two circles, one on each side of the central barrier of brush and trees.

In the early afternoon there was a silence in the camp and Kenge stood listening, looking across the camp to the south. He turned and told me that Cephu was not far away and would be here in a quarter of an hour. Almost to the minute Cephu arrived, leading a band of another five families. Most of them stopped at the edge of the camp at the south end; only Cephu and one other came over to the main camp to greet us and announce his arrival. A new fire had been built in the center of our clearing, opposite Manyalibo's hut, and Cephu sat down there, one of the younger men getting up to give him his chair. He asked about the hunting and gave us news of the village. He said that his brother, who was a cripple, had not wanted to come so far and had made a small camp half way, near Apa Kadiketu. After a few minutes he left, not having been offered anything to eat or any tobacco to smoke, and started building his own camp about fifty yards to the south of the extreme edge of the clearing. He built a tight little circle of huts, connected by a path to the main trail on one side and to the camp on the other. He chose that site because he had some relatives at that end of our camp.

The same day Manyalibo's daughter also arrived, with her husband, Ausu. Ausu was a handsome Pygmy, strong, and clever at hunting both with spear and with net. He had caught many wild pig, although he was only in his early twenties, and once, when still in his teens, he had nearly been killed by one. His wife, Kondabate, was a Pygmy belle if there ever was one, and she knew it. The two had been married for nearly three years but had no children. Kon-

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dabate still had her fine maiden's figure, with firm upstanding breasts. Nobody ever mentioned the fact that they were childless. Kondabate decorated herself more than any other Pygmy girl I have known, and by every possible means, Negro and Pygmy. She not only dyed her body with designs of vines and fruits, painted on with the black juice of the gardenia fruit, but she also had elaborate patterns cicatrized on her stomach, and her teeth were filed to sharp points so that when she smiled or laughed, as she frequently did, she looked just a little dangerous. Kondabate decided to build her house to the north of the hillock, so that she was next to old Sau, and opposite her father.

During the afternoon Amabosu, Sau's son—the great singer—went around from hut to hut with Manyalibo's adopted son, Madyadya. (Manyalibo had offered his molimo for Balekimito's festival, as Ekianga said he had none.) The two youths stood outside the entrance to each hut with a basket and a length of cord made from *nkusa* vine, the kind of cord used for making hunting nets. Madyadya held one end of the cord while Amabosu tied the other in a noose and laid it in the doorway of the hut. The owner of the hut, or her husband if she was not there, would put a small bunch of bananas in the noose, or a manioc root, or a bundle of mushrooms, or perhaps even a small piece of meat, and Madyadya would jerk the string taut. After a brief mock struggle he would haul in the catch and put it in his basket, then go on to the next hut. From every hut the two collected an offering of food in this way. When their basket was full they hung it up on a tree stump beside the central fire that was now blazing between Manyalibo's hut and the hut his daughter was busily making. This fire had itself been made up from offerings of wood collected from each family hearth. I remembered seeing Manyalibo go around taking an ember or log from every fireplace, whether the owners were there or not.

I noticed that only men sat at this fire and asked Kenge why this

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ever, thin and straight, with eyes still wide and unblinking and, it seemed, unseeing. She sat in the middle of the group, hugging her knees. Her skin sagged in withered folds, her bones stuck out in ugly lines and bumps. She made a strange contrast with the background of young feminine beauty and vitality. The only time she so much as moved was when Kondabate joined the group.

Kondabate, the belle with filed teeth and great diamond-shaped scarifications on her stomach; Kondabate the beauty, who after two years of married life still preserved her fine upstanding breasts and trim figure—but also Kondabate the childless. She had on a headdress like the old woman's, and her eyes, too, seemed unnaturally wide and staring. She was smiling and happy—until she sat down opposite the old lady. That was when the old woman moved, looking up from the fire into Kondabate's eyes. In an instant Kondabate seemed to lose her smile and her happiness. She became as empty as the withered old shell of a woman in front of her, and she sat as quietly, staring into the flickering flames.

After a while the men started singing again, but gently, and then with a shock I realized that the women were singing as well, the sacred songs of the molimo. And they were not just joining in, they were leading the singing. Songs that I had thought only the men knew and were allowed to sing—all of a sudden the women were showing that they not only knew them but could sing them with just as much intensity. Kondabate suddenly sprang up and seized the banja sticks from Kelemoke, and began beating the urgent molimo rhythm: *one* two, *one* two three, *one* two three. She beat the banja faster and faster, and I saw the old woman begin to twitch in every muscle. Kondabate was already half dancing, and it was as though she was passing the life and force from her body into the dried-up skinny old body in front of her. The old crone's legs started stamping up and down, and she sat back on her buttocks so that she could lift her feet higher. Then her arms began moving, pointing in

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the Pygmies came in to eat. The men came in and sat down and ate without ceremony while their patrons watched hungrily. But they were not related to Balekimito, so they could not partake. Women, too, were excluded, according to the village rules of the game, but I saw a number of dishes quietly slipped to one side, and shortly afterward all the women were enjoying their own feast, concealed behind the elima hut.

C 765 563 P 765 179

The villagers asked if everyone had ritually bathed, to wash off the taint of death, and everyone politely said yes. The villagers then asked if the Pygmies had any meat to spare, and the Pygmies equally politely said no. They had given it all to the molimo, they said, and to this there was no answer, for it was a very creditable thing to do, in village eyes. I bought a large quantity of palm wine, however, and this mollified to some extent the strained feelings of the patrons. They knew they were being deceived and cheated, yet they felt they were only doing what was right in trying to impose their beliefs and practices on the forest savages who had no culture of their own. If the forest spirits struck the Pygmies down for not having heeded their patrons, for not having performed all the necessary rituals as they had been told, then it was not the fault of the villagers. They drank their fill and departed.

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Once the Negroes had gone we all tried to get some sleep, for it was late afternoon and we had had no rest. But for three months the men had sung and danced and feasted every night and for three months the women and children had been sent to bed early, forbidden to come out and take part in the festivities except for the dance of the old woman. Now the molimo was over, and the women took advantage of the fact. After all, an elima had begun, and that was as important to the women as the molimo was to the men. At dusk all the girls of the elima came out of their hut. Their beautiful young bodies shone and glistened with the palm oil that had been carefully rubbed into the skin, making them even more alluring to

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the young bachelors. And together with the older women they began to sing, in deep contralto tones. The men protested loudly that they were tired and wanted to sleep. But the women just laughed and sang all the louder. The elima had started in earnest.

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something to eat." He gave Hari's sister a playful push on the head, then lay back and seemed to go to sleep.

Hari led us out and into the long triangular hut. We went right through to the back and there, on each side, was a narrow bed of sticks. Here, he said, Kenge and I were to sleep. This was the visitors' hut, he exclaimed. He and his sister slept in Kaweki's house. I asked who the visitors were, as Kaweki was reputed to have none. "Oh, I don't mean villagers," Hari said. "I mean Pygmies, his friends."

I had barely washed and sat down in the middle of the clearing to eat the food prepared by Hari's sister, when there was the unmistakable sound of a band of Pygmies approaching. In a few minutes a score of them burst into the clearing—young men and women, laughing and shouting their greetings.

They said that they had heard that Kaweki was ill, so they had come to hunt for him and make him well. What had promised to be a peaceful rest in a lazy fishing camp now threatened to be something very different. These Pygmies had come as far as we had, but within minutes of arrival they were off again for a quick hunt before the sun set. Kenge himself joined them, taking Kaweki's two hunting dogs and arming himself with a stout short-shafted spear. The women stayed behind to improvise some shelter for the night. But they decided it was too much work, so they just added some sticks and leaves to the visitors' hut, forming an elongated windbreak that reached almost over to Kaweki's house. By the time the men came back, empty-handed, they had installed themselves and were boiling pots of plantains and manioc, together with fish to which they had helped themselves from Kaweki's rack. That night those who could not squeeze into the shelters or into the overcrowded visitors' hut slept in Kaweki's house. I myself found that the longed-for blessing of sleep did not come easily. Kenge had, of course, found an old girl friend among the newcomers, and the two of them lay together,

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beside me, all night long, flirting and laughing. Even though I lost a lot of sleep I learned several new facts of life.

Over the next few days I saw the hunters go off to bring back the meat that would make their friend well and strong; and each day they collected roots and herbs which they prepared and gave to Hari's sister to treat Kaweki with. Just their very presence, boisterous and cheerful, was a tonic to the invalid. On the second night he came out into the clearing and lay down beside the fire, covered with a blanket. He joined in the conversation of the Pygmies, joking and telling stories in their own manner. Then he half sang and half chanted legends of the past, urged on by Hari, who sat nearby with all the attentiveness and affection of a son, smiling happily when he saw the villager that he loved as a father slowly regain his strength and life.

In a few days Kaweki was up and about, though he still tired quickly. He thanked his friends and told them that they had no need to stay longer if they wanted to go. But it was a happy camp, and everyone was in favor of staying. Kaweki had built a dam above the falls, channeling all the fish into a long wicker trap—some twenty feet of elaborate basketry which caught the fish and held them firmly in its meshes until they were pulled out and killed. But the recent storm, which had broken just the day before we arrived, had breached the dam and damaged the trap. The Pygmies decided that they would rebuild it for Kaweki, and while a few of them hunted the rest went off and cut the wood needed, and returned to work under Kaweki's supervision.

In the evenings the Pygmies sang songs they would ordinarily never have sung in the presence of a villager. But Kaweki was a lover of the forest, and to the Pygmies that was all that mattered. On the evening when Kaweki actually danced and declared himself completely cured, the Pygmies responded by singing a song of the

though there are certain restrictions connected with it. In fact, the Pygmies consider that any couple that really wants to have children should "sleep with the moon."

So when a young Pygmy girl begins to flower into maturity, and blood comes to her for the first time, it comes to her as a gift, received with gratitude and rejoicing—rejoicing that the girl is now a potential mother, that she can now proudly and rightfully take a husband. There is no mention of fear or superstition, and everyone is told the good news.

The girl enters seclusion, but not the seclusion of the village girl. She takes with her all her young friends, those who have not yet reached maturity, and some older ones.

In the house of the elima the girls celebrate the happy event together. Together they are taught the arts and crafts of motherhood by an old and respected relative. They learn not only how to live like adults, but how to sing the songs of adult women. Day after day, night after night, the elima house resounds with the throaty contralto of the older women and the high, piping voices of the youngest. It is a time of gladness and happiness, not for the women alone but for the whole people. Pygmies from all around come to pay their respects, the young men standing or sitting about outside the elima house in the hopes of a glimpse of the young beauties inside. And there are special elima songs which they sing to one another, the girls singing a light, cascading melody in intricate harmony, the men replying with a rich, vital chorus. For the Pygmies the elima is one of the happiest, most joyful occasions in their lives.

And so it was with happiness that we all heard that not one but two girls in our camp had been blessed by the moon.

At first it was just Akidinimba, daughter of Manyalibo's sister. Akidinimba was a notorious flirt who considered herself the most beautiful girl in the world. She was just sufficiently plump to be envied by less well-endowed girls, but not so plump that her maidenly

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881 figure was lost. She was particularly proud of her breasts, which
832 were certainly the largest in that part of the forest, and she showed them off to advantage, when dancing, by adopting an unusually springy gait. As her breasts bounced up and down the eyes of all the bachelors followed their movement with pleasure. Everyone agreed that Akidinimba's elima would be a lively one.

881 But Manyalibo's niece was in no hurry, so for the first few days she remained in the hut of her cousin, Kondabate, and there were no particular signs of activity visible from the outside.

Then we heard that Kidaya had also been blessed with the blood,
[159] and she went to join Akidinimba. Kidaya was a niece of Ekianga, and she was more modest than the really shameless Akidinimba. Kidaya was handsome rather than pretty, and she had a reputation for being able to beat up even the strongest youths if their advances were not welcome to her. So the elima promised to be exciting as well as lively.

The two girls each chose their personal assistants and called in all their young friends to join them in the hut of Kondabate and her husband, Ausu. Kondabate built on a special extension to accommodate them. This was in Apa Kadiketu, and not long afterward the elima was moved to the village, where it took over Ekianga's house. Mambunia, Masisi's brother, went with them to be "father of the elima," to make sure that they were protected and properly cared for. Asofalinda, Kidaya's aunt, went as "mother of the elima," to look after the personal needs of the girls, to see that they got the right food, and generally to act as chaperone. Mambunia was a bachelor, and Asofalinda a widow.

When we arrived at the village for the close of the molimo festival, the elima was well under way. The girls had already learned most of their songs, and they were now at the stage where they were taking a more active, even an aggressive interest in the eligible bachelors of the neighborhood. In the evenings, when they assembled

outside their hut to sing, they were carefully guarded by their mothers and older sisters. But the girls and their attendants cast sly glances at the young men who always drew close to watch and listen. They whispered and laughed among themselves, and when they stood up to dance they often made it very clear by their gestures which boy had taken their fancy. Sometimes they chose at random simply to annoy a special lover, and boys often stalked away in a huff. That was a mistake.

At any time of the day the girls were likely to emerge from the elima house armed with long fito whips. If you were close enough you could hear them plotting their strategy behind the door, but there was no escape once they burst out into the open. Any males, young or old, and particularly those who had shown annoyance at being teased, were liable to be chased and whipped by the eager young furies.

I myself was chased once, for a good half-mile down a forest trail, running as fast as I could. It was considered cowardly to run, but I ran with good reason, for to be whipped establishes an obligation to visit your assailant in the elima house. Once inside there is no need to do anything further, but you are subject to considerable attention if you refuse. And to get into the house, in the first place, requires no small amount of courage and strength. So I ran. Most other bachelors had less reason and no desire to escape, so they contented themselves with giving as good as they got, throwing sticks and stones at the girls, running around the village, dodging behind houses and through fields of sugar cane. The battles never lasted long, but sometimes they came to an abrupt end.

The girls often whipped old men or young boys, and in either case it was generally considered a compliment and did not carry the same obligations that it would have done had they been eligible bachelors. But sometimes they hit too hard, and the old men resented this and shouted, while the boys simply screamed their heads off.

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881 In the one case Mambunia would come out of his hut in a temper
832 and send all the girls back to their house, and in the other case Asofalinda would run amok among the girls, boxing their ears until they, in turn, cried like the children they had beaten.

881 But the elima beauties did not confine themselves to their own
574 village. After all, most of the men there were relatives and so could not decently be invited into the elima house. Many strangers came to visit from other groups, but sometimes the attendance was disappointing. Then the girls would set out to visit one of their hunting
[123] camps. I followed them on one such escapade, having secured a promise first that I would be given complete immunity. It was a strange procession, the girls all oiled and painted to look their best, wearing grass skirts in imitation of the boys' initiation (an innovation that infuriated the villagers, who felt that their customs were being desecrated, and that caused open hostilities in the end), and carrying stout whips, twice as tall as they were. There were about eight of them in all, led of course by the irrepressible Akidinimba, bouncing her breasts up and down in a determined manner as she marched along the road, past the Station de Chasse, and over the bridge to the far side of the Epulu River. The villagers came out to look as we passed, but from a respectful distance. On other occasions I have seen a party such as this dive into the midst of a group of village men and women, lashing out with all their might—not entirely in the friendly way in which they would whip, say, old Tungana, as a compliment to his virility.

On the far side of the Epulu we climbed up the hill toward Eboyo, the sun beating down on us so that the chatter and laughter of the girls was almost stilled. But just before reaching Eboyo we turned off, following a trail through an old plantation and into the
881 forest. As the trees closed in around and above us, the girls began to
574 sing. They sang loudly and proudly, marching with even more de-
533 termination than before, their heads back, looking at the familiar

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leafy world that was theirs. One at a time they sang ribald little solos, each trying to outdo the others, the rest joining in with a throaty chorus that cascaded downward like a waterfall. Each girl held her note as the others came in after her, swelling the volume of a great chord of music until they had no breath left. Then they all stopped together, sharply and suddenly, and cocked their heads to one side to listen for the echo sent back to them by the forest.

And so we continued our noisy, festive way, until we had climbed up and down the forest paths for about an hour. On this side of the Epulu the forest was hilly, and at times the path was steep and difficult. But still the girls sang. At last we came to the edge of one of Sabani's hidden plantations, and the girls became silent. They made their way cautiously to the edge of a cluster of houses built in the middle of the plantation. This was where some of Sabani's relatives lived when they were keeping an eye on planting or harvesting activities. Akidinimba explained, in a gusty, confidential whisper, that her very special boy friend, Pumba, would probably be there. She was very much in love with him, she said, far more so than with any of the other boys. And she wanted him. The only trouble was that he did not seem to want her.

Having discovered that Pumba was indeed there, dozing on a chair in the baraza of one of the houses, the girls entered the village with a rush, shouting and yelling and brandishing their whips. Pumba awoke with a start, but he was too low down in the chair and could not get up in time to escape. He was plainly terrified, because in her determination to get her man Akidinimba had detailed all the other girls to go for him alone. When Pumba finally managed to break away and run blindly into the safety of the hut, slamming the door shut behind him, his body was covered with long angry welts, some of which were bleeding. Akidinimba wiped her nose with the back of her arm and smiled grimly. Well pleased with her success she simply sat down outside the door waiting for Pumba

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881 to emerge. Pumba knew that he was no match for a girl with such
• 832 patience and perseverance. He opened negotiations from the other side of the locked and bolted door.

Akidinimba was in no hurry, so she carefully examined the door and the single window, to see if there was any chance of breaking in. But the door was stout, and the window was tightly closed by a wooden shutter. So she decided, with some statesmanship, to negotiate. In return for a promise that Pumba would be allowed to emerge free of any danger of further attack, and free of any other obligations, she extracted a reluctant promise that he would attend the final stages of the elima back at Camp Putnam. A very downcast Pumba emerged and immediately started complaining that there had really been no need to beat him quite so hard. The girls asked him where
881 the other Pygmies were, and he pointed across the plantation to the
832 far side, where the forest stood out darkly into the blue sky. The
574 girls told him to stay behind, and not to try and warn his friends. They then set off, this time with Kidaya to the fore, picking their way across the tangle of fallen trees slowly and silently.

On the far side we entered the forest and continued southward for a short while. Kidaya, plotting her strategy like a general, sent out a couple of scouts. As a result of their report, we veered around to one side until we came to a slight rise. From the top of this we looked down through the trees across a leafy floor, completely bare of any undergrowth except for a few ferns. Below us lay a typically picturesque Pygmy camp, shimmering in the haze of smoke from
[361] innumerable fires. It was built in two circles, joining each other as if
[517] in an attempt to become one. We could hear the idle chatter of men and women as they lay on their beds or on their hunting nets, dozing
[231] in the midday warmth. A dog wandered lazily from hut to hut, sniffing hungrily, confident that his masters were far too sleepy to bother him. The sun, directly overhead, came down through the trees in irregular, jagged shafts, so that parts of the camp were bright,

others in almost total darkness. It must have been quite an old camp, for all the leaves on the huts were dry and brown.

We crept right up to the nearest hut without being seen, and then Kidaya ran lightly across the clearing and gave the sleeping youth of her choice a sound thwack with her whip. He leaped up, not so much in fear or anger as in surprise and in shame that he should have been caught. He grabbed for his bow and picked up a small stone which he fired back at Kidaya as he ran away. Kidaya laughed with delight. This was a sure sign that her overtures had been accepted.

The whole of the camp was awake before the rest of the girls had had time to whip more than a few boys, and it soon became alive with lashing whips and flying sticks and stones. The women and children crept into the backs of their huts for shelter, while the men ran from rubbish dump to rubbish dump, gathering the banana skins they used as ammunition. When they could not find any, they used whatever came to hand. A slice of banana skin fired from a taut bow at close quarters can be quite painful, and the girls found that the boys were putting up a good fight. So they picked up a few vine baskets that had been left lying around, and using these as shields they advanced on their quarry.

The fight got more and more fierce, and at one time the boys managed to drive the girls right back into the huts. Then they stood at the entrances and fired their pellets of banana skin inside, giving rise to squeals of anguish. But Kidaya was too tough to be done down so easily. She emerged from her shelter without even a basket for protection, and made a dash for the nearest fire. As she bent down to pick up a burning log, her particular boy friend fired a pellet that struck her on her buttocks with a smack. Kidaya spun around and hurled the log with all her might; then she rubbed her backside affectionately and smiled. The other girls also began throwing logs, and soon there was hardly a fire left in the camp, and burning logs were scattered everywhere.

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881 everywhere. The men retreated to the outskirts of the clearing and
832 stood uncertainly, peering around trees or over the tops of huts, their
574 bows and banana skins at the ready.

But the girls felt they had achieved their end. Each one had marked her victim, who was bound by the strongest bonds of self-respect to respond to the challenge and brave the elima house itself. Pumba, who had followed at a safe distance, sat disconsolately on a log that Akidinimba had thrown at him in a friendly way, and he did not even look up as we left.

881 The girls sang all the way home; even when they left the forest and made their way back across the Epulu, gleaming orange and gold in the late afternoon light, they sang. They sang so that everyone should know that they were the *Bamelima*, the people of the elima, girls who had been blessed with the blood and were now women.

881 There were occasions when the mood was different. One evening
224 in particular, after a relatively quiet day, nearly all the women of the group gathered together outside the elima house. It was toward the end of the time that had been set, in an arbitrary fashion, for the duration of the festival. The Pygmies felt they had been in the village long enough, and the elima was interfering with their hunting. As much as the young men enjoyed hunting, the attraction of the elima house offered strong competition. If the boys were away too long, due to pressure from their parents, the girls complained that they were not being treated properly. Everyone agreed that this was an insoluble conflict, unless the elima was either brought to an end or moved out to the forest. It was not only the boys that were away from the hunt, but also the women and girls, who would otherwise have been gainfully employed gathering and helping to drive more animals into the men's nets. And the women said they were having far too good a time in the village. So it was decided to bring the elima to an end.

THE MARRIAGE OF KENGE

Kenge's decision came almost as much as a surprise to her as it did to the rest of us, as he was as notorious as Akidinimba for being a confirmed flirt. In fact, most people thought he would marry Biyo, Tungana's daughter. But Kenge said no, Tungana was almost like a relative to him, and it would be incest to marry his daughter. People pointed out that this had not stopped him from sleeping with Biyo, but Kenge maintained that the two situations were totally different. Anyway, he had set his heart on Maliamo, and she had set her heart on him.

The situation dragged on for so long that Kenge began to see rather more of Maliamo than was allowed by customary flirtation, and people began to whisper. This drove him to take more desperate measures with his sister.

One morning the village camp was awakened to the sound of terrified screaming from the house directly opposite mine, where Yambabo was sleeping. I looked out of my window and saw Kenge dragging his sister out of the hut by one arm, pulling her over the ground and shouting to the camp that she was no good and should be killed. He pointed to her breasts and said that she had enough milk to feed a dozen children, why did she refuse to marry? Yambabo was as strong as a buffalo, he continued, so why did she refuse to work? He then gave what he considered could be the only reason, which was extremely personal and uncomplimentary. Yambabo tried to get to her feet to hit him, but every time she began struggling he simply thumped her on the back with his fist, still keeping a tight hold of her with his other hand.

People came sleepily out of their huts to watch, all rather agreeing that Yambabo really should have married long ago and deserved a brotherly beating. Encouraged by this, Kenge began kicking her, and she responded by biting him in the leg. Moke tried to intervene, but it was no good. Kenge was ready for murder, and by the time he had finished with Yambabo she was a sorry sight, scratched and